

## EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

HONORING THE HARRISBURG HIGH SCHOOL LADY BULLDOGS BASKETBALL TEAM

**HON. BLAINE LUETKEMEYER**

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, April 16, 2012*

Mr. LUETKEMEYER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the Harrisburg High School Lady Bulldogs Basketball team for winning the Class 2 Missouri State Championship on March 17, 2012.

The young women and their coaches should be commended for all their hard work throughout the regular season and bringing home the state basketball championship to their school and community. In the final championship game against the New Haven Shamrocks, the Lady Bulldogs prevailed 43 to 32, making it their second state championship in three seasons.

I ask that you join me in recognizing the Harrisburg Lady Bulldogs for a job well done!

RESTORING ECONOMIC SECURITY FOR AMERICAN WOMEN

**HON. LAURA RICHARDSON**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, April 16, 2012*

Ms. RICHARDSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the report released earlier this month by The White House Council on Women and Girls which provided a sampling of the policies, programs, and legislative initiatives that have resulted from the Administration's efforts to create an economy built to last for American women. I cannot stress enough how critical women are to our nation's economic success and how there still exists an ever-present need for us to continue our efforts to end discriminatory practices in the workforce.

It is vital for us to work together to ensure women's economic security through all stages of life—from young women furthering their education and beginning their careers, to working women who create jobs and provide for their families, to seniors in retirement or getting ready for retirement. Many positive steps have been taken and much change has been effectuated, but there is much more that can be and should be done.

Today, more than ever, women's efforts in the workforce are essential to sustaining a strong economy, not to mention that more women now are the primary income earners in most American families. Yet women in our economy and our work force are still earning just 77 cents on every dollar paid to men. Couple the gender gap with statistics on race and it is even worse. African American women

earn a mere 64 cents on the dollar, while Hispanic women receive an appalling 56 cents on the dollar compared to men. How can this still be when women now make up nearly fifty percent of our workforce? Families are effectively losing part of their income every month due to this gender inequality.

We must put an end to discriminatory practices in the workforce once and for all. Expanding economic opportunities for women is critical to building an economy that restores security for middle class families. We must promote such an economy by encouraging the advancement of women in education and the workforce and by rewarding their efforts equally and accordingly. We must ensure that women who want to continue their education and attend college and graduate school can do so. We must ensure that when a woman seeks higher employment she is able to attain it without being discriminated based on her gender and more importantly where she will receive equal pay as her male counterpart. We must ensure that fulfillment of such goals for women are not an improbability, but a guarantee.

We no longer live in the 1950s where a sole income earner, historically a man, could support an entire family. We are living in an era where the want for a dual income is not a luxury, but a necessity to sustain a middle class family. I applaud President Obama's hard work to ensure that women are treated equally in the workforce and paid fairly for their work. From signing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, to creating the National Equal Pay Task Force, President Obama has fought for equality for women in the workforce, and there is no reason why this Congress should not work equally as hard to support and advance his efforts. There should be no second class citizens in our workplaces in the twenty-first century.

In a time where women's labor force participation has increased dramatically and where families are becoming increasingly reliant on women's incomes due to the rising cost of living, how does it make sense that pay disparities between men and women still persist? Why must women face greater risk for income insecurity than men? The reality is that over the course of her lifetime, these pay discrepancies can cost a woman and her family tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost wages, reduced pensions, and reduced Social Security benefits. Why is it that the Republican majority is not concerned about these disparities?

The statistics on this issue are very clear; we cannot have a vibrant society if women are not doing well. The success of American women is critical for the success of American families and the American economy. Consequently, when women still face barriers to participation in the workplace and marketplace, it affects all Americans.

Unfortunately, rather than concentrating on eliminating such discrepancies and ensuring equality, the Republican majority has instead

been fixated on limiting women's rights and freedoms. For over a year now the Republican majority has taken aim at denying women access to health care and restricting women's choices in the area of reproductive health altogether. This is an incredibly ill-guided waste of time, and makes no economic sense. When women are denied access to health care or have to pay more for their health care than men, it hurts entire families and in turn the economy as a whole. In 31 states, all of the best-selling plans engage in gender rating. And in states that permit this practice, 92 percent of the best-selling plans charge 40-year-old women more than 40-year-old men for identical coverage. In the aggregate, women spend an estimated \$1 billion more than men for equivalent health coverage. We should be working together to eliminate these disparities, instead of fending off attacks by the Republican majority who have continuously brought forth anti-women's health legislation in the 112th Congress and attacked the Affordable Care Act which beginning in 2014 will prohibit insurance companies from charging women more for health insurance simply because of their gender.

The Republican majority has taken minor breaks from attacking women's rights in this Congress only to work on stripping senior benefits and ending Medicare as we know it. All seniors should be able to retire with dignity, and live out their final years with security and access to healthcare. This should not be a privilege enjoyed by the 1 percent. We must work to ensure that senior citizens receive the care they need when they are most vulnerable; but instead the Republicans want to hand them a voucher and have them fend for themselves with insurance companies. The coverage Medicare provides is particularly critical for women, because of their greater life expectancies and partially because of costs related to preventive services such as mammograms and bone density tests.

As a result of lower earnings during her time in the workforce, an elderly woman rarely has a significant income from her pension, as compared to the average elderly man. So it should not be surprising that elderly women rely on Social Security to a greater extent than men, and over half of America's more than 48 million Medicare beneficiaries are women. And this is where unequal pay throughout a woman's working lifetime comes full circle.

Mr. Speaker, let us in Congress work together to pass legislation that outlaws gender discrimination, allows for prosecution of pay discrimination against women, invests in child care, and supports the advancement of women as they provide for their families and save for the future. It is through our hard work to ensure equal treatment of all women in the workforce, marketplace, and society as a whole that we can resoundingly voice our commitment to support American women and families.

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